

## Morning Rundown: Indians Hold Strong in Race After Taking Series Against Mets

Written by {ga=ninocolla}

Thursday, September 05 2013 11:00 PM - Last Updated Tuesday, September 10 2013 6:38 AM

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The momentum of Rally Chicken has worn off. The Indians are two back of the AL Wild Card and thanks to a huge weekend from the upcoming Kansas City Royals, actually 5.5 back of the Tigers in the AL Central. Now they'll just need their own momentum swing to get them through the rest of this month.

They're going to be in the race til the very end. I have to keep preaching it, because this team is still alive and thanks to their schedule, they've got the chance to do damage. That red-hot Royals team though that just beat the Tigers two out of three, they're coming to town for an ultra important wild card swing series.

**METS - 2 | INDIANS - 1**

**W: Frank Francisco (1-0)**

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**L: Chris Perez (5-3)**

### [\[BOXSCORE\]](#)

First off, before this goes any further.

If you were paying attention a few weeks ago, Daisuke Matsuzaka wiggled out of his contract with the Cleveland Indians, left Columbus and found a home in New York.

And on Sunday [he started against the team that he spent most of the year with](#) , even though he really didn't actually pitch with Chief Wahoo on his cap.

Dice-K went into the sixth and gave up just a run off three hits and three walks. It wasn't until his replacement, Vic Black, hit Asdrubal Cabrera with the bases loaded that the Indians scored a run and it wasn't even off him, technically, even though it was his run.

*"It stinks when he comes in and deals against us," Indians reliever Joe Smith said, "when we've had him the whole year."*

Oh, yeah, that was the Indians only run. Through the nine innings, their five hits equaled that lone run and it was the reason the Indians couldn't put the Mets away with a sweep. They didn't have a lot of opportunities, but they were really frustrating in the ones they had.

After three really, ho-hum innings the Indians got things started in the fourth with a Swisher single and a Kipnis walk. Three quick outs to follow that though left that inning for dead and didn't get anything going again until the sixth.

The big chance came in the eighth after Joe Smith wiggled out of the cruddy inning Cody Allen

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had set up and Rich Hill didn't help with. Smith retired Justin Turner on a strikeout and got Juan Lagares to ground out with the bases loaded.

Swisher lead off the inning with a walk and then Jose Ramirez replaced him and advanced to second on a Santana single. Yan Gomes would walk with just one out. All the Indians needed was to put the ball in play the right way and they would have a lead for the ninth.

Asdrubal obliged on one of the most ridiculous pitches you could swing at early in the count. Double play, inning over, opportunity squandered, game lost, pace in the standings gone.

The Mets came up in the ninth and got to Chris Perez, which probably sent shockwaves through the pulse of Cleveland. Oh, no, it didn't. The Browns lost, so I don't think anyone actually noticed until now. Either way, Perez let up a run in the ninth after the squandered opportunity. Kind of hard to come back after you get a big inning from Smith and then miss your chance to score. You can only go so long with a bullpen putting up zeros when they came in to start the fifth inning and they've been pitching all weekend.

The other run came at the hands of Justin Turner, who was tormenting Indians pitching all weekend. He hit a solo shot against **Danny Salazar** who was able to strike out eight hitters in four innings and give up just the solo shot.

*"Turner just killed us this series," Francona said of the Mets third baseman, who had three extra-base hits and four RBIs in the three games. "But it was an elevated fastball. [Salazar] just had a hard time working down."*

And that was that. It would have been fantastic to win all three, but the series was won and you just gotta keep that momentum up against Kansas City. You can't expect to sweep them, but you can expect to win two out of three before you have four against the Sox this weekend.

*"It's nice to be greedy," Indians designated hitter Jason Giambi said. "But at the end of the day, we won two out of three. That's what we can do. You'd like to reel off as many wins as you can, especially in this situation, but that's a good Mets ballclub."*

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### Random Notes...

Almost getting something started in the ninth inning against LaTroy Hawkins was Jason Giambi, who had a bloop single to left field. It was incredibly more significant than just a leadoff single [though as it marked Big G's 2,000th hit](#)

*"The thing that's going to be most special," Giambi said, "is who I got it off of in Troy, who I have the utmost respect for not only as a player, but as a human being. That's going to mean more to me over my career than that hit."*

Giambi slipped rounding first, and had to get up and scamper back to first. He was then lifted for Mike Aviles, who was thrown out trying to steal second and then thrown out of the game for arguing that fact. It looked as if he was tagged from the umpire's angle, but by another it looks as if he was safe based off when he was tagged. Sad to say, Aviles was out, so the umpire got the call right and the Mets ran through the ninth with little issue after that.

Aside from getting hit in this one for the lone run and that home run the other night, pretty sad series by Cabrera who had just one hit. [He did do this though](#), which was pretty fantastic.

Matt Albers was fantastic. He finished off the fifth and pitched the sixth and seventh innings for the Indians, helping them get through seven frames without digging into the more reliable arms. Of course one of those reliable arms had a bit of a breakdown, it was huge on his part.

### [RANDOM RUNDOWN]

The Indians were without **Michael Brantley** this weekend, which is why Matt Carson was often in the game at the end as a defensive replacement in left field. Brantley [was with his wife in Florida since Friday](#) to witness the birth of his first child.

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*"I said, 'We'd love to have you hit fifth, but if you miss the birth of your baby, I would have a hard time,'" Francona said. "Dealing with experience, I missed one of mine and it's not good. In this day and age, as important as baseball is to all of us, and to me more so than probably anybody ever, I still would hate to be responsible for somebody missing the birth of their child. So, he's on his way."*

Two wins out of it, they could have really used him on Sunday for a clutch hit, but this is life. Francona had to let Brantley go. No word on Baby Brantley but the assumption is that it was going to arrive this weekend and that Brantley will be back with the team on Monday. No official word on that yet.

Kind of sad to watch **Vinnie Pestano** struggle the way he is. The fall from grace that he has had has been quite the thing to watch. And frustrating to boot. Pestano [&nbsp;made his return to the majors this weekend](#) on Saturday and he struggled doing so.

*"Last night, I didn't know where the bottom was. Another level just keeps opening up and I keep falling down. But, I keep standing up. I keep answering the bell. I'm not going to quit. I'm going to battle for every pitch I can."*

Bullpen coach Kevin Cash suggested that there was a little bit more pressure on him because of his return and that you can't read too much into him facing two batters. But for a guy who's job it is to face three batters a game, that isn't good enough for Pestano, who says that he is just been in the battle of his career.

*"Two batters, you can't read too much into it -- I don't necessarily agree with that," Pestano said. "I've been battling all year. The minute I think I've got something figured out, I go out there and the results just aren't there. It's just getting really frustrating. I'm still the same pitcher in my head, but I'm just not throwing the same way like I'm used to. It's late, it's been a long year, DL, all that stuff. It's just been a really difficult year. A lot of guys in this clubhouse, and a lot of guys on our staff, they haven't seen me at my best. So it's tough to come in here sometimes and look guys in the eyes after you cash in their runs, and you're supposed to be the player that you are, and you're just not even playing up to half that capability."*

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It is really sad to watch him go through this. Because we all know he can be a lock down eighth inning guy. And now a new pitching staff is here and they're probably all wondering themselves, "When is THAT guy going to show up?" Because so far, they've not even had a chance to see the real Pestano. This is a lost year for him, that's a given before the season even ends. What he has to do now is just try and figure things out and at least end on a better note so he doesn't go into the offseason wondering and sitting on this uncertainty of what has happened for four months.

From a guy struggling in his bullpen role, to a guy thriving in his bullpen role. **Carlos Carrasco** is figuring things out [the old fashioned way, one inning at a time](#)

*"Maybe pitching out of the bullpen allows you to simplify some things," Indians bullpen coach Kevin Cash said. "I think everybody has kind of stressed to him that, 'When you come in and get those appearances out of the 'pen, think of yourself more as a power pitcher.'"*

Even Carrasco was blunt about his success. The Indians want him as a starter, and perhaps being in the pen has changed his perception of how to pitch, because he is even cognizant of how he is attacking hitters and how he is taking his approach. It is rather incredible really to watch him "get it". If only he can now apply it to his starts. Because really, that's what it has always been with him. He has the stuff, which is why the Indians want him as a starter, but the mental aspect has always been the issue.

*"The reason that I'm pitching good out of the bullpen," Carrasco said, "is I never think about when the time is coming to pitch. As a starter, you have four days to think about how you're going to attack the hitters and everything. In the bullpen, I just wait for [pitching coach Mickey Callaway] to call so I can get ready. That's made me more comfortable. And, to be honest, out of the bullpen, I come at the hitters more aggressive."*

Again, he needs to take that mentality to his starts. If he can't, then he just isn't cut out to be a starter, so it's good to know the Indians have this as a fall-back. But really, if they can get seven innings out of him every five days rather than one or two every three, then well, they want that.

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Interesting to see how this rotation situation is going to pan out in the coming weeks. Scott Kazmir went out and struck out 12 Mets in six innings (holy crap!) with the [help of something called cryogenics](#)

Cry-o-genics? Is that like making him drink tears or something? Whose tears is he drinking and how can we get them to Kluber to fix his finger quicker?

Kluber started Saturday and was able to go five solid for the Tribe on 64 pitches. It only goes up from here. There has been a lot of bullpen arms used, which is why the Indians called up so many arms. The Indians could very well go with a six man rotation, something Francona said was possible with so many consecutive games coming up as we enter the middle portion of the month.

Tomlin is just waiting for his shot, [so that's another arm the Indians can use](#) if they need it.

*"I'll get in there eventually. I'm not complaining," Tomlin said with a smile on Sunday morning. "We're winning. I mean, don't get me wrong, I want to pitch, but they're doing a pretty good job right now."*

You know, if Masto didn't go down, this rotation would be looking pretty good. Justin is going to [be re-evaluated sometime this week](#) and could begin playing catch, but time is ticking on his return.

The Indians are doing what is right and playing Yan Gomes almost every day. Gomes and Santana have been in the lineup nearly every day with Gomes [getting a majority of the starts](#) behind the dish.

The Indians teased a big announcement Thursday night. They said it was coming Friday morning and it involved Nick Swisher in some way. Most of us were hoping that Rally Chicken would be signed to a long-term deal or receive his own coup in the bullpen, [but it was actually just about Fireworks](#)

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He also called the ballpark "The Pro".. comma, man. [He's just trying to make Ohio cool again](#) . Ya know? Wait, again? When was it ever not cool?

Speaking of the chicken. [&nbsp;It was returned to the farm](#) . I have to imagine it has a nice little souvenir in the cape that it donned on Wednesday. Credit Tito on his reaction to being asked if it reminded him of the fried chicken controversy from his time with Boston.

*"I actually hadn't thought of that," Francona said after letting out a hearty laugh. "That's pretty good. As long as the chicken wasn't drinking beer, we're good to go."*

Ya just gotta laugh at yourself sometimes. Love it.

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*Nino is in full baseball mode here and on [The Tribe Daily](#) , his own Indians blog. Don't miss all the fun, photoshopped Indians players, and LOLTribe ridiculousness.*

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